



Frequently Asked Questions *Final Rule to Delist Foscett Speckled Dace*

What action is being taken by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

The Service is removing (delisting) Foscett speckled dace (*Rhinichthys osculus* ssp.) from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Wildlife because it has recovered and no longer meets the definition of threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

What type of fish is this?

The Foscett speckled dace is a small minnow in the Family Cyprinidae and is considered to be an undescribed subspecies of *Rhinichthys osculus*. The Foscett speckled dace is represented by a single population that inhabits Foscett Spring and nearby Dace Spring on the west side of Coleman Lake in Lake County, Oregon. They grow up to 4 inches (10 centimeters) long. Foscett speckled dace are believed to spawn between late May and early July and reproduce in their second year of age.

Where is this fish found?

The only place in the world where Foscett speckled dace live is in Foscett Spring and nearby Dace Spring on the west side of Coleman Lake, also in southeastern Oregon. Foscett Spring itself represents a unique habitat within the Warner Valley. The spring is isolated in the Coleman Subbasin, water temperature is constant at approximately 65 degrees Fahrenheit year round, and has higher mineral concentrations than other springs in Warner Valley.

Why was this fish listed?

The basis for the listing determination of Foscett speckled dace was due to a very restricted range, low numbers, and narrow range of occupancy that was vulnerable to and experiencing habitat destruction or modification. Factors included ground water

pumping for irrigation, excessive trampling of the habitat by livestock, channeling of the spring for agricultural purposes, other mechanical modifications of the aquatic ecosystem, and livestock water uses.

When were these fish listed?

The Foskett speckled dace was listed as an endangered species in 1985. Critical habitat was never designated.

How is this delisting possible?

Partnerships have been the foundation of the recovery of both fish. Conservation partners have led the effort to protect Foskett and Dace Springs. With threats alleviated, the Service is able to propose removal of the Foskett speckled dace from the list of threatened and endangered species.

At the time of listing, Foskett Spring was within a 160-acre parcel of land in private ownership and in 1987, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) acquired the 160-acre containing Foskett Spring for conservation of the species.

The Oregon Desert Fish Working Group, comprised of agency and organization personnel along with academics, has met annually since 2005 to share research and conservation information regarding these fish. This group has been proactive in improving the conservation status of the Foskett speckled dace - by reviewing habitat and population information collected by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). The group noted that encroachment by aquatic plants was limiting population abundance which led to restoration actions to increase open-water habitat. These efforts at both Foskett and Dace springs substantially increased dace abundance. It is likely that ongoing habitat maintenance at Foskett and Dace springs will be periodically necessary to maintain open water habitat for the Foskett speckled dace and this maintenance has been committed to in the August 2015 Cooperative Management Plan signed by BLM, ODFW and the Service.

How many fish are in the springs?

During the more than two decades Foskett speckled dace populations have been monitored, they ranged from a low of 1,728 fish in 2011 to a high of 24,888 fish in 2014. Monitoring of Foskett speckled dace has shown considerable variation in abundance correlated with the amount of open-water habitat which varies seasonally and annually. As noted above, the BLM has manipulated the vegetation in recent years by burning and excavation to increase the extent of open-water habitat to support the conservation of the Foskett speckled dace. During the more than two decades Foskett speckled dace populations have been monitored, they ranged from a low of 1,728 fish in 2011 to a high of 24,888 fish in 2014. Monitoring of Foskett speckled dace has shown considerable variation in abundance correlated with the amount of open-water habitat, which varies seasonally and annually. As noted above, the BLM has manipulated the vegetation in

recent years by burning and excavation to increase the extent of open-water habitat to support the conservation of the Foskett speckled dace. Most recent population estimates are: 2015 was 16,340; 2016 was 1,830; and 2017 was 4,279.

The recent habitat enhancement work and the commitments made in the Cooperative Management Plan have resulted in assurances that the species will persist in the future with minor oversight and continued habitat enhancement by BLM and ODFW.

Why does this matter to me as an Oregonian?

This fish is only found in Oregon, and they have adapted over tens of thousands of years to their unique desert habitat. These fish and the springs are treasures of our state.

I don't live in Oregon. Why does this matter to me?

The ESA is the last line of defense for species facing extinction. With every species that is lost, however small or seemingly insignificant, we leave our children and their children beyond a more impoverished planet, and deprive them of the opportunity to benefit from healthy ecosystems and a vibrant biodiversity. Recovering species is an achievement to be celebrated because we have honored our commitment to the future generations. Downlisting and delisting recovered species also means the Service can focus its limited resources on other species still facing the risk of extinction.

How does this help other desert species?

Aquatic ecosystems within a desert ecosystem provide important habitat and are a haven for biodiversity. As these wetlands are protected or restored, many other species have benefitted beyond the fish. Foskett and Dace Springs support a variety of aquatic organisms as well as waterfowl and terrestrial desert species that come to drink. These species are protected within this secured habitat and removing the overgrowing emergent vegetation allows more open water for these animals.

How does a species get removed from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Animals?

When a species is put on the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Animals, the Service develops a recovery plan that includes specific recovery goals. Reviews of the species' status are conducted every five years. Once we determine the recovery goals are met and threats no longer prevent the population from persisting into the future, the species can be proposed for delisting. After we consider comments from the public during a formal rulemaking process, and are sure the proposal is warranted, the species is removed from the list.

Have other fish been delisted from the ESA?

Oregon chub was the first fish delisted due to recovery, which means the fish has a healthy, thriving population and no longer requires the protection of the ESA. Modoc sucker, found in Oregon and California, was the second fish delisted due to recovery.

Other fish have been delisted, one (coastal cutthroat trout) as a result of taxonomic revision and four (Amistad gambusia, Tecopa pupfish, blue pike and longjaw cisco) due to extinction.

How many other species have been removed from the Endangered Species List?

In the 40-plus years since the ESA was signed, 46 species have successfully recovered and been removed from the endangered species list.

How many other fish are currently on the Endangered Species List?

There are 167 fish species listed under the ESA in the United States.

Aren't fish listed under the ESA managed by NOAA Fisheries?

Not necessarily. Generally, species such as salmon and steelhead that spend the greater part of their life in salt water are managed by NOAA Fisheries, in the U.S. Department of Commerce. Fish that spend most or all their lives in fresh water, such as the Oregon chub and bull trout, are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in the Department of the Interior.

Could the fish become endangered again?

Threats to this species have lessened, and populations are stable so that the species is not currently and is not likely to again become a threatened species. A post-delisting monitoring plan for the Foscett speckled dace is completed, building upon and continuing the research and monitoring that was conducted during the listing period. The monitoring plan will assess the status of the dace and ensure that this species maintains its recovery.

What other species in Oregon and the United States are being recovered?

Several Oregon species have been recovered or are on the path to recovery. In addition to the Oregon chub and Modoc sucker, the Borax Lake chub was recently proposed for removal from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Wildlife. In the non-fish arena, the Douglas County population of the Columbian white-tailed deer was delisted in 2003, and the Lower Columbia River population was downlisted from endangered to threatened in 2016.

For more information about these fish and links to the federal register notices, visit <http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/>.